



**Highland Park ISD
Preschool Program Handbook
2023-2024**

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HIGHLAND PARK ISD PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The goal of the HPISD Preschool program is to reduce disparities in academic achievement between groups of students (e.g., students of different socioeconomic, students with disabilities, racial, and ethnic groups), especially when Preschool access and quality are emphasized. By improving kindergarten readiness and boosting the skills of English Language Learners, and students identified with a disability (Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) students), Preschool contributes to improving early outcomes so that more identified Texas children can perform better in their early years of school. Blended Preschool classrooms are specifically designed to combine qualifying students with tuition-based peer models to ensure high-quality learning outcomes for all.

Highland Park ISD offers a limited full-day Preschool program that operates on a flexible start and stop time to include 435 minutes per day. Please contact your individual campuses for exact timings. The program is not offered on all campuses; however, any student in HPISD may be considered for the program through one of three pathways that include:

1. Students with a disabilities who require services through a Preschool program as determined by an IEP/ARD Committee meeting
2. Students who are eligible for Preschool services based on the state of Texas [eligibility guidelines](#)
3. Students who are selected from the waitlist to attend as tuition-based peer models.

Tuition-based peer model students are selected for enrollment from a first-come, first-served waiting list. Enrollment of tuition-based students is limited and is based on the projected enrollment of qualifying Preschool students. Classes are currently held at Bradfield Elementary, Hyer Elementary, University Park and Boone Elementary schools.

The full-day program includes a variety of learning and play activities that follow the TEA Preschool Guidelines. Within the blended Preschool classroom students from the three pathways are served in the same classroom providing a diverse environment where students serve as role models for one another. This blended model provides a highly-impactful setting for learning; families interested in a tuition-based peer model spot are encouraged to get on the waitlist early as spots fill quickly each year. More information about the three pathways and the waitlist for tuition-based students can be found in this handbook.

HPISD's Preschool program follows the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) High-Quality Preschool Program requirements that include an established curriculum and a state-recommended assessment program for monitoring learning which can be found [here](#).

According to HPISD Board Policy, children of staff members who do not reside in the district are not eligible to attend the HPISD Preschool program.

Staffing

HPISD Preschool follows the TEA and TEC Preschool staffing Statute TEC 29.167 (d) which states:

"A school district must attempt to maintain an average ratio in any prekindergarten program class of not less than one certified teacher or teacher's aide for every 11 students"
[HQPK Ratio](#).

PATHWAYS TO THE HPISD PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

As stated above, there are three pathways for students to confirm placement in one of HPISD's blended-model Preschool classrooms. Each pathway has a unique process for identification. The descriptions below provide information about how to request a placement in the HPISD Preschool program.

1. Pathway for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Students

Students in this pathway are ages 3-5, identified with a disability, and demonstrate a need for special education.

Description of the ECSE Pathway

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) provides special education and related services for eligible children with disabilities ages three to five. Students aged 3-5 identified with disabilities may be served in a variety of ways, for example, a full day in the Preschool program, a partial day in the Preschool program, or walk-in speech services based on the Admission Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee's decision.

ECSE serves children identified in at least one of the thirteen special education disability categories. Services, which may begin on the child's third birthday, are provided in the least restrictive environment. Students who are deaf or blind are served beginning at birth. The primary goal of ECSE is to provide early intervention that prepares students for success in general education or in the least restrictive environment by age six. The instructional focus is to provide opportunities for learning that are appropriate for each child's developmental level.

In alignment with best practices for early childhood education, the ECSE program facilitates the mastery of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals of each student. If a student in ECSE is not making progress toward IEP goals, an ARD committee meeting will be scheduled to review and revise the IEP as needed.

Identification Process for ECSE Students

Children who are suspected of having a disability are provided with a Full Individual Evaluation (FIE) by HPISD. Parental consent is obtained for an FIE, and the evaluation is completed by the school district within 45 school days. In the case of an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) referral, the evaluation will be completed on or before the child's 3rd birthday. Appropriate services for each ECSE student are based on the recommendations of the ARD committee.

Tuition and Fees for ECSE students

There is no cost associated with any ECSE services including participation in the Preschool program through the ECSE pathway.

2. Pathway for Preschool Eligible Students

Students in this pathway are age 3 or 4 and meet at least one of the state's Preschool [eligibility criteria](#).

Description of the Preschool Eligible Pathway

The Texas Legislature has determined eligibility requirements for free, public Preschool in Texas; eligibility is limited to the categories outlined. Although a district cannot require a student who is eligible based on the state criteria to attend a Preschool program, it must be available for students who do meet eligibility requirements. The Preschool Eligible pathway in HPISD is designed for those students. In the HPISD blended Preschool model, students from all three pathways will attend together in the full-day program.

If at any time, the school staff suspects the student may be a student with a disability, they will follow the Child Find procedures for referral for an evaluation. If the student is evaluated and qualifies for special education services, the transition could potentially involve a classroom change to provide the needed special education services.

Identification Process for the Preschool Eligible Pathway

Students who meet one of the eligibility criteria as outlined by the state of Texas may express interest in participating in the HPISD Preschool program by notifying Cristy Hirsh, Director of Student and Administrative Services, at 214-780-3015. After eligibility has been documented and verified by the district, students in this pathway will be granted access to the program without utilizing a waitlist. For the 2023-2024 school year, the criteria are as follows:

To be eligible for enrollment in a free Preschool class, a child must be at least three years of age on or before September 1 of the current school year (if a 3-year-old program is available) or four years of age on or before September 1 of the current school year and meet at least one of the following eligibility requirements:

- unable to speak and comprehend the English language (determined by district testing)
- is educationally disadvantaged (eligible to participate in the national school lunch program... guidelines about NSLP eligibility can be found in sections 4 and 6 of the Texas Department of Agriculture's Administrators Reference Manual)
- is homeless, as defined by 42 USC, §11434a, regardless of the residence of the child, of either parent of the child, or of the child's guardian or other person having lawful control of the child
- is the child of an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who is ordered to active duty by proper authority
- is the child of a member of the armed forces of the United States, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who was injured or killed while serving on active duty
- is or has ever been in the conservatorship of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (foster care) following an adversary hearing held as provided by Family Code §262.201
- is the child of a person eligible for the Star of Texas Award as: a peace officer under Texas Government Code §3106.002, a firefighter under Texas Government Code §3106.003 an emergency medical first responder under Texas Government Code §3106.004

The district will verify the student is eligible for Preschool services and may, therefore, require specific documentation to enter the program through this pathway. For students who are unable to speak English, parents will be asked to complete a Home Language Survey (HLS) and sign permission for oral language proficiency testing to determine eligibility. For students who are in foster care, guardians will be asked to provide a corresponding *Designation of Education Decision-Maker Form* (Form 2085-E) from Child Protective Services. Other categories may require additional documentation through the district's office of Student Services.

Tuition and Fees for the Preschool Eligible Pathway

There is no cost for eligible HPISD children who attend the Preschool program as verified Preschool eligible students as outlined by the state of Texas.

3. Pathway for Tuition-Based Peer Model Students

Students in this pathway are age 3 or 4 and participate as tuition-based peer model student; there is a waiting list to indicate interest in participating.

Description of the Tuition-based Pathway

Students may be considered for a tuition-based peer model placement for the HPISD blended model Preschool program. This full-day blended program allows students from all three pathways to learn together. Tuition-based students serve as peer models for students with disabilities while receiving instruction based on the TEA Preschool Guidelines. Spaces for tuition-based students are limited.

****All students entering the HPISD Preschool program through the tuition-based peer model program are expected to be potty trained. Occasional accidents are developmentally expected but a student should be primarily potty trained.***

If at any time, the school staff suspects the student may be a student with a disability, they will follow the Child Find procedures for referral for an evaluation. If the student is evaluated and qualifies for special education services, the student will transition to the ECSE pathway if the ARD committee determines services in the ECSE Preschool program are needed; this transition could potentially involve a classroom change to provide the needed special education services.

Identification Process for Tuition-based Peer Model Students

Admission to the Preschool program for tuition-based peer model students will be on a first-come, first-served basis from the tuition-based student waitlist, regardless of the home school campus and determined by the current student ratio needed for the ECSE program; waitlist submissions will be time-stamped as they are submitted electronically.

The tuition-based peer model student waitlist is completed using the Google form link provided in this handbook. Parents will be notified if their child has been approved as a tuition-based student no later than April 1 for the next school year. After acknowledging acceptance, a parent will enroll the child in HPISD at the designated campus. If a student fails to enroll and/or attend school within the first five school days, the student will forfeit his or her spot and another student will be offered that placement. For more information about enrollment, please see the Enrollment Process Section of this handbook.

Prior to the beginning of the school year, if a tuition-based student leaves the program and a spot becomes available, the next student on the list will be notified until all spots are filled. Students who attend at age three will receive first consideration for spots available as returning four-year-olds at their home campus. In late January, a form will be sent to the parents of three-year-old students asking them to indicate interest in attending the following school year; forms should be submitted by the indicated deadline in early February.

Tuition and Fees for Tuition-based Students

Tuition for the 2023-2024 school year is \$8,500/year, \$4,250/semester, or \$850/month. Tuition increases, if any, will be announced no later than April 1 before the next school year.

Tuition can be paid in one lump sum through Skyward before the first day of school or can be paid monthly no later than the 1st day of each month. If tuition is paid by semester or month, there will be a \$30 processing fee per charge. If tuition is not paid by the 10th of each month, your child will be unenrolled from the Preschool program on the 11th.

If the parent chooses to withdraw the student from the program, tuition will be prorated based on the cutoff date of the 15th of the month. The prorated amount will be either half or a full month's tuition. The parent/guardian will need to submit a written notice to withdraw to the Special Education Coordinator on the student's campus one month prior to the termination of the agreement.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Class Hours and Attendance

Classes will be held Monday through Friday for 435 minutes per day on school days identified on the HPISD calendar. Students in ECSE may attend part or all of the class; adjustments to an individual child's school day are determined by recommendations of the Admission/Review/Dismissal (ARD) Committee. Tuition-based and Preschool eligible students must regularly attend the full day.

Please notify the office as soon as possible to report your child's absence; it is also extremely helpful to notify your child's teacher. If your child arrives late, please check him/her in through the front office.

Classroom Information

Curriculum

All instruction will follow the HPISD Preschool Curriculum which is based on the TEA Preschool Guidelines.

The Texas Preschool Guidelines are based on current knowledge of theory and scientific research about how children develop and learn; they reflect the growing consensus among early childhood professional organizations that a greater emphasis be placed on young children's conceptual learning, acquisition of basic skills, and participation in meaningful, relevant learning experiences. The guidelines delineate the behaviors and skills children are to exhibit and achieve and instructional strategies for teachers.

They provide information on responsive teaching practices, the physical arrangement of a Preschool classroom, professional development as the key to high-quality Preschool programs, the involvement of families for better school readiness of children, strategies for bilingual instruction, considerations for children with special needs and disabilities, and methods of monitoring children's progress. The Texas Preschool Guidelines are intended to be useful to a broad audience including school districts, Head Start programs, child care providers, and most importantly, children's families. Finally, the guidelines provide a means to align Preschool programs with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

More information about the TEA Preschool Guidelines can be found at: <https://tea.texas.gov/pkg.aspx>.

Progress Reports

During the first nine weeks, teachers will assess all students on Preschool skills and objectives. A parent/teacher conference will be scheduled to discuss progress after the assessment is completed.

Daily Schedule of Activities

The classroom teacher will provide the parents/guardians with a general daily schedule. Students in the Preschool program will be included in the campus activities when appropriate.

The following is an example of the contents of a daily schedule:

- **Welcome and Arrival:** Children are welcomed and then independently select activities as they arrive.
- **Morning Meeting Time:** Each morning children will review daily topics such as the calendar and weather for the day.
- **Circle Time:** Children join with classmates to talk about the day. Students may engage in literacy and mathematics activities.
- **Center Time:** Children choose from activities in the centers, which include dramatic play, table toys, blocks, art, sensory boxes, books, light boxes, and iPads. Learning is child-centered through play facilitated by the staff.
- **Clean Up:** Children learn the importance of concluding activities, putting away materials, and cooperating with others.
- **Small Group Instruction:** Children receive intentional instruction on targeted objectives in a small group setting. Students are taught language, literacy, and mathematical concepts and skills through a variety of instructional strategies.
- **Outdoor Learning/Activity Room:** Energetic outdoor play provides opportunities for children to develop large muscle coordination and to engage in social interactions. Children also learn self-management by following rules and safety guidelines.
- **Nap Time:** Children will be scheduled for a short time to rest during the school day. A nap mat will be provided for each child. Parents will be asked to provide a towel (to be refreshed weekly) to cover the mat for the student's comfort.

- **Music and Movement:** Children will experience music and physical activities in the classroom and on the playground. In addition to developing large motor skills, children will learn to follow rules and safety guidelines through these fun activities.
- **Story Time:** Teachers read to children in large and small groups. Reading enhances listening comprehension, stimulates thought-provoking questions and conversation, and develops the concept of print and vocabulary.
- **Specials:** Children will attend a session of library, science lab, music, art, and PE each week.
- **Dismissal:** Children are encouraged to review the day's events and independently collect their belongings.

Lunch

During lunch and snack times, students may also work on social skills, fine motor skills, and self-care. Therefore, the parent/guardian will provide a sack lunch with a drink and a snack. Additional snacks will be provided in the classroom. If a student has any allergies, please notify the classroom teacher and the school nurse. If a parent is financially unable to provide a sack lunch, a school lunch will be provided at no cost.

Materials and Supplies

Most materials and supplies will be furnished for the classroom. Parents/guardians will be responsible for providing the child's backpack, a clean towel (to be refreshed weekly) to cover the nap mat, an extra set of clothing, and diapers if the child is not potty trained (tuition based peers models are required to be potty trained). Parents are encouraged to label all materials and clothing with the child's name.

Field Trips

The students may attend field trips throughout the school year. Parents will have opportunities to help chaperone on the various field trips. Students will be provided with a special field trip t-shirt (to assist with safety and identification); students will be expected to wear the designated t-shirt for all field trips.

Health and Wellness

- The campus will have access to a registered nurse.
- The classroom staff will follow the universal precautions when dealing with bodily fluids.
- If a student becomes seriously hurt or ill during the day all efforts will be made to contact the parent/guardian or person listed on the emergency contact list. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached by telephone, the student will be transported by ambulance to an emergency room and the parent/guardian will be held responsible for all expenses.
- Per district policy, students may not attend school if they have had a fever or vomiting within the past 24 hours.
- Students may return once they have been symptom-free and un-medicated for 24 hours.
- Students must be free of any communicable diseases in order to attend school.
- Medications will be dispensed according to the district guidelines.
- Students will need to adhere to all state vaccination requirements.

Emergency Contact Information

- Student emergency contact information is kept on file in the front office and clinic.
- If the student is taking medications, a card must be kept on file with the school nurse.

Enrollment Process

After a student has received confirmation of placement in the Preschool program, regardless of the pathway, the parent/guardian must complete the campus enrollment process. The following criteria will apply:

- The child must be 3 or 4 years old by September 1 of the year he/she is enrolled. (Note: An exception may be made for an ECSE student who is 5 years old depending on individual circumstances.)

- A birth certificate must be provided for age verification.
- Proof of residency indicating the home is within Highland Park ISD boundaries must be provided.
- The child must attend full time Monday through Friday unless a personalized day has been designed by the ARD committee.
- The families must agree to the tuition (if applicable) and guidelines associated with the Preschool program.
- The parent must complete the HPISD online new student enrollment process (or if returning complete Back to School Sign-up documents) for the designated/assigned Preschool campus and submit all required enrollment documentation. Office personnel will review enrollment form submissions for completion.

Reminder: All students must complete the enrollment forms to be eligible to attend the first day of school. Any questions regarding enrollment paperwork should be directed to the front office of the designated campus. Parents/guardians should not complete the enrollment process until after receiving the confirmation of their child's placement in the Preschool program.

Preschool Program Contacts

General Information

For general questions regarding Preschool Special Education (ECSE) eligibility or Tuition-Based placements:

Cynthia Marlow-Gould, Preschool Program Director and Special Education Coordinator at Bradfield Elementary
 214-780-3294
 MarlowC@hpsid.org

For questions regarding the Texas State Eligibility Guidelines:

Cristy Hirsh, Director of Student and Administrative Services
 214-780-3015
 HirshC@hpsid.org

Campus Contacts

Bradfield Elementary

Cynthia Marlow, Special Education Coordinator
 214-780-3294
 MarlowC@hpsid.org

Hyer Elementary

Laura Sherman, Special Education Coordinator
 214-780-4391
 ShermaL@hpsid.org

University Park Elementary

Jacqueline Holland, Special Education Coordinator
 214-780-3445
 HollanJa@hpsid.org

Boone Elementary

Camille Browder, Special Education Coordinator
214-780-4190
BrowdeC@hpsid.org

Waitlist Link

The link provided below is to the Tuition-Based peer model Student Waitlist for the Preschool program. Parents/guardians are encouraged to complete the waitlist as spots fill quickly each year. **This waitlist is only for tuition-based spots** and is not applicable for students entering the Preschool program through the ECSE or Preschool Eligible pathways. For more information, see the Pathways to the HPISD Preschool Program section in this handbook. Please contact Cynthia Marlow Gould at 214-780-3294 if you are unable to access the waitlist.

[Tuition-Based Peer Model Student Waitlist Form Link](#)